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NEWSPAPER

The labor crisis: finding solutions

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...Charles Bernstein/Page F3

Nation's
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The Weekly Newspaper of the Food-Service Industry

Vol. 22, No. 22 | Published every Monday by Lebhar-Friedman Inc.; $3 a copy, $26.50 a year | May 30, 1988

Chinese delivery on a roll

Independents, chains flock into hot market

By Jack Hayes

Chinese home delivery, the infant food-service concept orphaned by two major chains after failed efforts in Texas and the Midwest, is finding a new home with generous independent foster parents in several East Coast markets.

Furthermore, independent Chinese operators in other cities across the nation are looking hard at starting up, expanding, or even reviving earlier experiments with home delivery.

Despite the recent sale of Minneapolis-based Leeann Chin by General Mills and the abandonment of home delivery at Pillsbury Co.'s Quik Wok in Texas and Louisiana, a host of new operators are emerging.

The pacesetters include:

- Hop Too's, a Fort Lauderdale, Fla.-based start-up operating in Broward, Dade, and Palm Beach counties, has nine more stores in physical development across Florida and ambitious plans for expansion via franchising.
- Mr Ching, a year-old player in the Chinese home delivery segment, projects 10

*(See **CHINESE**, page 7)*

Mr Ching delivers volume in Atlanta

The year-old experiment is nearing $500,000-a-year sales at three units in the suburbs. Seven more outlets and a move into town are on the menu.

Page 7

NRN photo

General manager Jay Rice in Salty's dining room.

Salty's sparks smiles at Happy Guests

By Alan Liddle

PORTLAND, Ore. — With a panoramic view of the Columbia River, the new Salty's here can't help presenting a bright face to the patrons who pile in daily.

The fourth Salty's waterside seafood restaurant opened by Happy Guests International in the Portland and Seattle area, the Columbia unit did more than $1 million in sales in its first quarter. General manager Jay Rice is projecting a first-year volume of as much as $5 million for the 300 seater situated between Portland and Vancouver, Wash.

He expects sales to pick up in the coming months because warmer weather means Salty's can use its 185 deck seats. Also fueling optimism is the opening of a fish-and-chips window this month.

Successfully meeting first-year sales projections would make the operation one of the region's highest-grossing res-

*(See **SALTY'S**, page 78)*

New survey diagnoses heavy health-plan costs

By Ken Rankin

WASHINGTON — Pending legislation mandating employer-paid health insurance benefits for both full- and part-time workers would increase payroll costs for the typical small restaurant (with less than $500,000 in annual sales) by an average of $18,500, according to a new study released by the National Restaurant Association.

However, the survey found that even large fast-food chains and other food-service operations that now offer health insurance coverage for their employees would face substantial cost increases if the legislation is enacted.

At Marriott, for example, it has been estimated that a federally mandated health benefits law would boost the company's annual personnel costs by $100 million—nearly half of Marriott's total net profit for 1987.

The bill, introduced last year by Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., would require all employers to provide comprehensive health insurance coverage to all employees who work at least 17.5 hours per week.

At a minimum the bill would require companies to furnish insurance covering inpatient and outpatient physician and hospital care, mental-health benefits, prenatal, and well-

*(See **HEALTH**, page 78)*

Cano breaks from El Torito for own venture

By Richard Martin

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — Mexican dinner house pioneer Larry Cano, the founder and president of El Torito Restaurants, has left parent company Restaurant Enterprises Group Inc. to form a new dinner house development firm.

Larry Cano

Cano's company will continue to work with the chain he launched 34 years ago under a two-year contract to manage eight of the chain's highest-volume specialty

*(See **CANO**, page 78)*

FOOD WATCH

Catfish at the Kremlin

MOSCOW — Negotiators, dignitaries, and nearly 4,500 journalists at the Reagan-Gorbachev summit here in early June will dine on a distinctly American dish—catfish prepared with Cajun spices by Louisiana restaurateur and chef John Folse.

Folse is the owner of four restaurants, including Lafitte's Landing in Donaldsville, La. He will set up a temporary American restaurant the week of the summit in the hotel restaurant of the World Trade Center in Moscow, where American negotiators will be staying.

Although many types of American food will be offered, catfish will be used for all the fish entrées, such as blackened catfish and seafood gumbo.

"We should make catfish a household word," said Folse, who has set up similar ad hoc restaurants in Canada, Spain, Japan, England, and Hong Kong.

—Ken Frydman

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Vol. 22, No. 22 May 30, 1988

NEWS DIGEST

Pizza Hut begins rollout of Hand-Tossed Traditional

WICHITA, Kan. — In an effort to wring more business out of pizza parlors' best customers, Pizza Hut has begun the chainwide rollout of its Hand-Tossed Traditional pie.

The new item features a crust that is thinner than Pizza Hut's pan pizza but thicker than that of the chain's conventional pies.

The Hand-Tossed pie, which has been extensively tested, is targeted at "a substantial segment of what the industry terms the 'heavy pizza user,'" said David Novak, Pizza Hut's senior vice president of marketing. "This group eats pizza more than twice as often as the national average.

"If Hand-Tossed Traditional pizza can help us capture just one more visit a month from this group, our system's annual sales will go through the roof."

Chipwich founder partying his way into home delivery

SECAUCUS, N.J. — Richard LaMotta, the inventor of the Chipwich ice cream novelty, has launched a home delivery business that he says will become the Avon of the food industry.

Called Sundborn Ltd., the company offers some 200 types of nitrogen-frozen foods processed by small companies throughout the country. Patrons can order the products via catalogs or at parties similar to those used by Tupperware, the housewares company, to sell its wares.

The Sundborn catalog is illustrated with color photographs of frozen appetizers, entrées, desserts, snacks, and breakfast items. Children's selections and reduced calorie items are included. Complete theme menus are also suggested.

Prices range from $1.25 for a 5-ounce package of egg linguine to $32 for a 40-ounce rack of ribs. Items are delivered within 24 hours, packed on dry ice.

Tony May opens NY version of Italy's San Domenico

NEW YORK — A Manhattan version of San Domenico, a highly regarded restaurant in Imola, Italy, has opened at 240 Central Park South near Eighth Avenue, the former home of Alfredo, an Italian restaurant that was on the site for years.

For the opening of his fourth New York restaurant, owner Tony May brought in Gianluigi Morini, who operates the San Domenico in Imola, and his chef, Valentino Marcattilii.

May, who used to manage The Rainbow Room, owns Palio, a pricey midtown Italian restaurant featuring regional specialties; Sandro's, a more casual trattoria; and La Camelia, which features traditional southern Italian food.

Gorin's dipping stores add hard-scoop yogurt

ATLANTA — Gorin's Homemade Ice Cream, a 30-unit string of dessert and sandwich shops, is adding a line of hard-scoop yogurt in eight flavors under the name Gorin's-Style Frozen Yogurt.

The flavors include banana, blueberry, raspberry, strawberry, banana-blueberry, banana-strawberry, chocolate almond, and peanut butter fudge.

Each Gorin's Homemade Ice Cream unit will carry at least three variations, said Mark Kaplan, Gorin's chief executive.

The new yogurt line is priced just like Gorin's ice cream—single scoops at $1.19 ($1.55 with homemade cone) and double scoops at $2.19.

Southland, in about-face, buys stores from National

DALLAS — Southland Corp. has inked an agreement to buy 43 convenience stores in Las Vegas, Nev., from National Convenience Stores Inc. for an undisclosed amount.

Houston-based National Convenience said it would use the proceeds to reduce debt.

Ironically, Southland, which has also been diffusing debt by selling assets, sold 270 stores to National Convenience in January.

Southland, which owns and operates 7-Eleven stores, currently has 113 units in southern Nevada.

Dairy Queen operator sells 31 units to Houston investor

OKLAHOMA CITY — Dunn's Dairy Queen & Brazier has sold its 31 Dairy Queen restaurants located in 17 cities in Oklahoma to the Oxford Group, a Houston-based investment banking group, for an unspecified amount.

The stores, which are franchised from 5,000-unit, Minneapolis-based International Dairy Queen, grossed about $9 million in 1987.

Aside from renaming the group DQ Enterprises Inc., the new owner of the restaurants said it didn't plan any changes.

Howard Johnson franchisor slates orange-roof revamp

SOUTH WEYMOUTH, Mass. — Franchise Associates Inc., the franchisor of Howard Johnson restaurants, has hired a design firm to develop a new look for the familiar orange-roofed concept.

FAI plans to use the new format as an expansion vehicle, said the design firm, S&A Consultants of San Francisco.

The West Coast concern said it has also been assigned the task of developing a new look for Howard Johnson's menus and uniforms.

McD's rolls equipment innovations

OAK BROOK, Ill. — McDonald's said it is rolling out several new pieces of equipment, including an in-store minicomputer, a high-speed toaster, and a clamshell grill, in an attempt to shave labor requirements.

"Equipment innovations can make McDonald's a better place to work, and employee retention is a crucial concern," senior vice president Bob Beavers told shareholders during McDonald's recent stockholders meeting here.

The fast feeder also revealed at the meeting that it will license units in the U.S.S.R. to citizens' cooperatives, and that two out of every five new stores will be developed overseas. Executives said that the world's largest food-service concern plans to open or franchise 550 units in 1988.

Ed Rensi, president and chief operating officer of McDonald's USA, confirmed that the fast-food giant is testing such regional products as a steak biscuit sandwich and a sausage gravy item.

Also under consideration, he said, are breakfast tortes, a chicken sandwich, and McPizza.

Although McDonald's Cheddar Melt, a short-term promotional hamburger, "was very successful on a limited basis," it was "not successful enough to put it on the menu," Beavers said in response to a shareholder's question.

Both Beavers and Jack Greenberg, McDonald's chief financial officer, effusively praised the chain's new in-store processor, a unit-level computer that uses a piece of proprietary software to streamline certain managerial responsibilities.

That "little computer wizard" pares a unit manager's work load by hours each week, allowing him or her "to spend more time with employees," Beavers said.

About 2,000 McDonald's have already been outfitted with a clamshell grill, which simultaneously cooks both sides of a hamburger.

To complement that new item, McDonald's has developed a bun toaster that warms the bread in 35 seconds rather than the 55 seconds needed for a conventional toaster. "We're currently working on an 18-second toaster," Beavers said.

12 nominated for Golden Chain awards

NRN readers to pick six winners by ballot

NEW YORK — Twelve leading food-service chain executives have been nominated as candidates for Nation's Restaurant News' 1988 Golden Chain awards as food-service operators of the year.

MUFSO '88

Readers of NRN will select six Golden Chain winners from the 12 in a ballot to be printed in an upcoming issue. The six winners will be honored at NRN's annual Multi-Unit Food Service Operators awards banquet at the Washington, D.C., Hilton and Towers Tuesday evening, Oct. 4.

One of the six will be elected MUFSO Operator of the Year by the MUFSO Academy, consisting of all annual Operator of the Year and Golden Chain winners dating back to 1971.

Jack Laughery, chairman of Imasco USA (Hardee's), was last September's NRN MUFSO Operator of the Year at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles.

For details on the Oct. 2-5, 1988, MUFSO conference, please contact Chris Hernandez at (212) 371-9400, Ext. 282 or 283.

The 12 Golden Chain nominees, in alphabetical order:

- Alvin Copeland, chairman, Popeyes Famous Fried Chicken, New Orleans.
- Fred Gonzales, president, JB's Restaurants, Salt Lake City.
- Jack Goodall, chairman, Jack in the Box, San Diego.
- Edgar W. Ingram III, president, White Castle System, Columbus, Ohio.
- T. Mark McCall, president, Ryan's Family Steak Houses, Greenville, S.C.
- Thomas Monaghan, president, Domino's Pizza, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- Steven Reinemund, president, Pizza Hut, Wichita, Kan.
- Larry Ritter, president, Rax, Columbus, Ohio.
- Leonard Roberts, president, Arby's, Atlanta.
- Jeff Rogers, president, USA Cafes (Bonanza), Dallas.
- Hal Smith, chief executive, Chi-Chi's, Louisville, Ky.
- Robert Wood, chief operating officer, Bob Evans Farms, Columbus, Ohio.

Three of the 12 nominees are from chains headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, long a center of food-service chain activity.

The criteria for the awards are long-term contributions to a particular chain and to the industry in innovation, training and motivation, and quality and consistency.

Poll: AIDS-infected staffers scare away customers

But nearly half of respondents think workers with AIDS should get disability, not ax

By Bill Carlino

NEW YORK — Restaurants would suffer a significant drop in business if customers learned a waiter or a cook had contracted Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome, according to a recent Louis Harris survey.

Of 1,250 people interviewed by telephone in the American Management Association-commissioned poll, 30 percent stated they would "definitely stop" eating in a restaurant if they discovered a waiter had AIDS, while 26 percent indicated they would "probably stop" going.

However, if a cook became infected with AIDS, 42 percent of those surveyed would terminate their patronage despite a Centers for Disease Control claim that the virus cannot be transmitted through food.

Although fear of exposure from infected food would drive customers away from restaurants, just 13 percent of those surveyed thought that a waiter with AIDS should be let go, while nearly half of them (47 percent), believed that he should be placed on disability.

Nine percent of survey respondents voted to keep a waiter with AIDS on payroll but advised the owner to inform customers of the situation. Sixteen percent said the owner should retain the waiter but protect customers against infection.

Similar results were obtained regarding a cook's status. Sixteen percent were of the opinion that the owner or manager should fire him, while 52 percent said he should be placed on disability.

What would you do if you learned a cook at the restaurant had contracted AIDS?
(in percents)

Continue to go	7%
Probably continue	18
Probably stop	30
Definitely stop	42
Depends	1
Undecided	2
Refused to answer	—

Source: Louis Harris

What would you do if you learned that a waiter at your favorite restaurant had contracted AIDS?
(in percents)

Continue to go	10%
Probably continue	28
Probably stop	26
Definitely stop	30
Depends	2
Undecided	3
Refused to answer	—

Source: Louis Harris

What should an owner do if he learns a cook has contracted AIDS?
(in percents)

Fire cook	16%
Keep him, tell patrons	8
Keep him, tell no one	13
Put him on disability	52
Depends	5
Undecided	6
Refused to answer	1

Source: Louis Harris

What should the owner of a restaurant do if he learns one of his wait staff has contracted AIDS?
(in percents)

Fire waiter	13%
Keep him, but tell patrons	9
Keep him, tell no one	16
Put him on disability	47
Depends	5
Undecided	10
Refused to answer	1

Source: Louis Harris

"What restaurants and other industries need is not termination, but education," said Keith O'Connor, an attorney for the New York City Human Rights Commission. "If an owner feels that the fear of AIDS is becoming a problem for his staff, he should arrange for a public health official to come and speak on the subject.

"In a restaurant in a large city like New York or Chicago, there's an excellent chance that at least one worker would test positive for the human immunodeficiency virus," O'Connor said. "Legally, you cannot fire a food-service worker because he has AIDS or even change his position to get him away from food. If the disease has progressed to the point where he's too ill to work, then he can be placed on disability."

In 1985 the Supreme Court ruled that the AIDS virus must be classified a handicap under the federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

In School Board of Nassau County vs. Airline, the court held that persons impaired by contagious diseases should be classified as handicapped under the federal Rehabilitation Act and thus entitled to protection from discrimination for a job in which they were otherwise qualified.

The CDC estimates that between 1 million and 1.5 million Americans carry the AIDS virus.

The complete results of the survey are published in "AIDS: The New Workplace Issues" (American Management Association, 1988).

Bernstein wins award for Soviet Union report

NEW YORK — Charles Bernstein, chief editor of Nation's Restaurant News, was awarded first prize this month for general reporting excellence in the annual competition of the New York Business Press Editors.

He won the coveted award for his 70-page exclusive report in Nation's Restaurant News May 18, 1987, "Food service in the Soviet Union."

The account, based on his two-week trip to four major Soviet cities, described in articles and pictures the entire food-service scene, the effects of *glasnost* and "private enterprise" restaurants, and the emergence of McDonald's and Pizza Hut as prime candidates for launching units in Moscow.

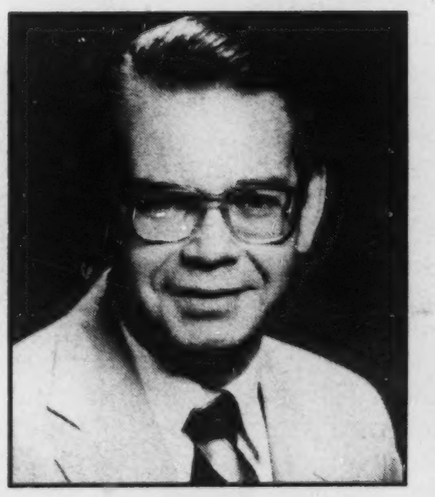
Bernstein was the first American journalist to cover the food-service scene in the Soviet Union.

He obtained exclusive interviews with key Soviet food-service and economic officials during his visits to Moscow, Odessa, Tallinn, and Tbilisi.

Editors of 200 business publications throughout the United States submitted entries in the competition for editorial excellence. A panel of six journalistic experts selected the winners.

Second prize in the "reporting on a general issue" category went to Andrea Bennett of the American Banker for her extensive coverage of "Rural Banks Burned by Bond Trading."

The other finalists in the category were Marianne Wilson of American Druggist, "Pharmacists Fight AIDS"; William Lurz of Professional Builder, "Solving Land-Use Problems"; Jerrold Ballinger of Catalog Business, "What Ever Happened to the Kitchen Table Start-Up?"; and T.E. Yeshion of Hospital Physician, "Examination of the Rape Victim and Collection of Forensic Evidence."



Charles Bernstein

Bernstein, a graduate of Cornell University and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, started his career as a reporter on the Bergen Record and the Asbury Park Press, both in New Jersey. He then became financial editor of Fairchild Publications' Drug News Weekly.

He joined Lebhar-Friedman's Discount Store News in 1966, rising to managing editor before being named executive editor of L-F's Nation's Restaurant News in 1973. He has been chief editor since 1976.

Bernstein is a frequent speaker at industry conferences and at hotel-restaurant management and culinary colleges. He is the author of two books, "Great Restaurant Innovators: Profiles in Success" and "Sambo's: Only a Fraction of the Action."

CORRECTIONS

Tony May

Dave Ianucci

"Cossetti banquet highlights trip" and "Italians honor four Americans," Page F70, May 23, carried incorrectly captioned photographs.

The photograph captioned Tony May of Palio in New York, in fact, pictured Giorgio Santuz, Italian transport minister.

And the photograph captioned Dave Ianucci, owner of Crier in the Country, Glen Mills, Pa., in fact pictured Filippo Frattaroli, of Ristorante Lucia, Boston.

Corrective pictures and captions appear here.

* * *

"'Big John' Grisanti shutters flagship, launches Peter K's," Page 42, May 23, confused two restaurants of the same name.

The Grisanti's Restaurant in suburban Memphis, Tenn., is being closed, while the original downtown location remains open.

Nation's Restaurant News

FOCUS

The Labor Crisis:

LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS

By Bill Carlino

As the industry suffers from a shortage of 200,000 employees and a 250% turnover rate, operators fight the crisis with recruitment and retention plans.

Is good help really that hard to find?

In the midst of high turnover and a widening labor shortage, both independent restaurateurs and franchisees are trying to find answers to that clichéd question while they brace to meet the challenges of employee recruitment and retention.

Results from a recent National Restaurant Association-commissioned Gallup poll reveal an industry shortage of 200,000 employees in eating and drinking establishments for 1988. Median crew turnover for the restaurant industry straddles 250 percent.

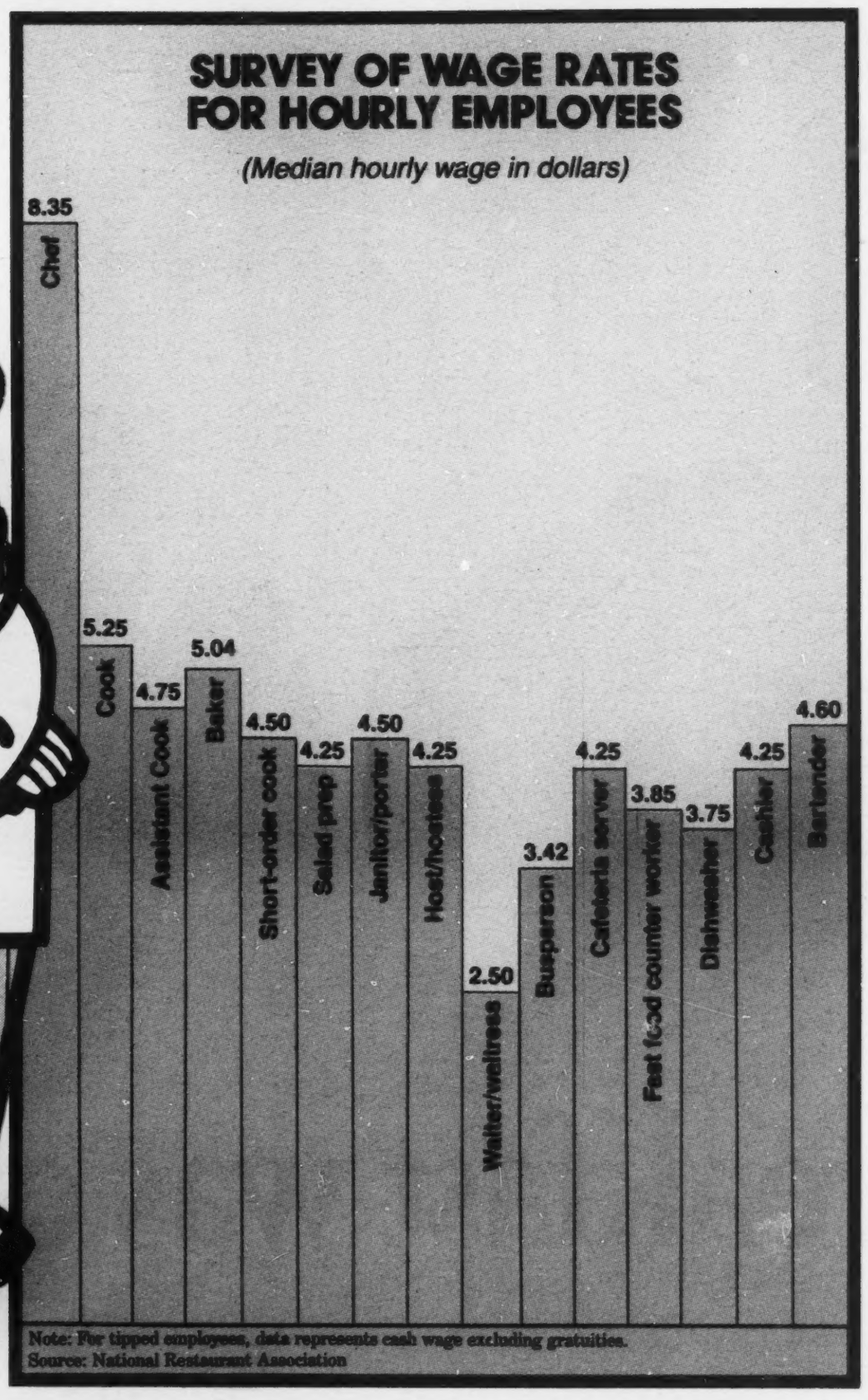
Labor shortage estimates for the upcoming summer months—when business is at its highest volume—approach one-quarter of a million employees.

"The labor pipeline in our industry is drying up, and it's only going to get worse," says Marvin Saul, the owner of Junior's, a $6 million deli operation in Los Angeles.

"As national unemployment figures drop, restaurants are usually the first ones affected by a labor shortage. We need to create a labor force, and that comes only through professional training."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 6 million people were employed in eating and drinking establishments last year, representing 6 percent of total employment nationwide.

*(See **LOOKING**, page F6)*



VIEWPOINT this week

Small operators: unsung sector

At a time when large operators dominate the industry, editor Charles Bernstein reminds readers not to forget the 'little restaurants'

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Handicap bill gets support

Ken Rankin discusses the Capitol Hill reaction to legislation outlawing discrimination against handicapped in restaurants

Page F4

FOCUS | VIEWPOINT

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The small operator takes it on the chin

A great deal of attention has been focused on the problems confronting major restaurants and chains throughout the country. We constantly hear about customer counts being off, labor and food costs rising skyward, outrageous rents, unfair taxes, impossible legislation, terrible saturation.

It all almost makes us want to crawl and hide somewhere away from the apparent woes of the food-service world. Mergers and consolidations abound, pressure on all operators is more intense than ever before, and the scene is rapidly becoming a survival battle.

In the midst of the myriad challenges, one segment seems to be almost completely forgotten: the little guy, the small entrepreneur who is still the lifeblood of the industry in an age of bigness.

Larger is by no means better in this business, as we well know or should know. One doesn't necessarily need an annual volume of $3 million or $1 million or even $500,000 to make an impact.

Cities and communities throughout America are still dotted with "little restaurants" whose annual sales are in the $200,000-to-$500,000 range. These true independents very likely account for at least half the total of America's 400,000 restaurants.

Yet the interests and aspirations of small operators are often overlooked in a pell-mell rush to support chains and large restaurants. No doubt big operators carry a great deal more clout in Washington and in state capitals. But on the streets customers look more to neighborhood places than to giant restaurants as their eating havens.

Unfortunately, the interests of the small operator often go unheard beneath the blare of headlines about woes facing chain after chain and the constant publicity about "the 100 biggest chains in America," "the 500 largest independents," and so on.

It is easy to lose sight of reality and the massive contributions of smaller restaurants. They are indeed the backbone and the true entrepreneurs of the industry.

However, they are faced with overwhelming problems that make the complaints of the big operators look tame by comparison. Minimum wage increases may not matter to McDonald's and to other massive operations, which to their credit already can afford to pay well above the minimum and do. But these increases could mean life or death to the small operators, who cannot absorb the increased labor costs.

Nor would impending mandatory health-care and benefits legislation do anything but make life far more difficult for the small operators. These social-service-mandated benefits would merely make it that much tougher to survive.

Most of all, the small operators have of necessity relied on ethnic employees and immigrants far more than have the large operators. Severe restrictions on hiring immigrants are draining this crucial source of workers.

In effect, small operators have to be constantly on their guard since under the new immigration law they can be held responsible and fined or even jailed for hiring immigrants the government has deemed "illegal."

Many small operators have been working with their state associations to help employees become legal immigrants under the law's new provisions, but it is still an inhibiting factor.

We are not suggesting that employees should not receive a decent living wage or reasonable benefits. However, practicalities imply that smaller operators be given some leeway in these matters. Otherwise, many of them will go out of business.

That would only hurt employees and customers alike.

Large operators may continue to dominate much of the food-service industry. Yet the small operators, besieged by skyrocketing costs and lacking the volume to overcome this dilemma, deserve recognition, respect, and relief.

LETTERS

Dennis Riese, Riese group: don't mistake identities

Editor, NRN:

The story about Dennis Riese in your May 9 issue misrepresents the nature of Dennis Riese's association with the Riese Organization and his affiliation with a number of restaurant concepts operating in New York City.

The Riese Organization is one of the country's largest private restaurant operators. Its principals are Irving and Murray Riese. The corporate headquarters is at 162 W. 34th St.

We own and operate hundreds of restaurants and concessions, including a number of national franchises, such as Sizzler, El Torito, Houlihan's, T.G.I. Friday's, Del Taco, Pizza Hut, Roy Rogers, Church's, Jack's, Arby's, Nathan's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken, to name a few!

Many of there franchise agreements give us the exclusive rights to operate these concepts in the metropolitan area.

Dennis Riese is the president of Riese New York, a newly formed company with offices at 919 Third Ave. His company owns the Houlihan's at 1409 Sixth Ave. and the original Friday's at 63rd Street and First Avenue. We understand he is attempting to develop some new franchise agreements and expand his T.G.I. Friday's operations and concepts.

We wish him all the best in his efforts but feel compelled to point out the following errors in your article.

He currently does not operate a single multiple concepts food location in Manhattan. The restaurants referred to in your article—Sizzler, El Torrito, Houlihan's, Del Taco, Pizza Hut, Roy Rogers, Church's, Jack's, Arby's, Nathan's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken—are operated by our company, The Riese Organization.

We have no intention of eliminating our successful Sizzler operations; on the contrary, we are planning to expand them.

The T.G.I. Friday's in Rockefeller Center as well as the Friday's at 484 Eighth Ave. and 47 E. 42nd St. are owned and operated by The Riese Organization.

Finally, and most important, we are a restaurant company. Certainly we have real-estate interests, but they go hand in hand with our restaurant operations.

We are now in the midst of an unprecedented expansion of our restaurant ventures. In the interest of fairness we believe neither your publication nor the public should confuse Dennis Riese's restaurant group with ours.

—Vincent McCann
chief operating officer
The Riese Organization
New York, N.Y.

NRA needs active position in FDA-ETS testing plan

Editor, NRN:

In answer to Ken Rankin's column on the FDA-ETS mandatory testing plan, I offer the following observation.

Until the NRA takes this same active position toward nationwide testing (based on the fine training program that is already in place), we are a fat, ripe target for any privateer that is willing to perform a "service" that we will not direct ourselves.

Sure, it may be tough to break the news to all the absentee owners and managers in our industry and a somewhat saturated industry at that. However, every time an incident occurs like the recent hepatitis outbreak in Virginia Beach (traced to an employee who didn't wash his hands after using the rest room), the case against us is strongly reinforced.

Imagine what would happen if Rankin's article appeared in Tidewater area newspapers. Frankly, given the monetary incentive here, I'm surprised this hasn't been jammed down our throats already.

—Robert B. Ramsey
William, Robert Bruce & Associates
Richmond, Va.

San Francisco prices give New York a good name!

Editor, NRN:

I have been a loyal Nation's Restaurant News subscriber for almost 10 years. Despite having left the food business some six years ago, I can't bear to stop my subscription! Thanks for maintaining an informative, timely, well-written and comprehensive publication year-in and year-out.

I thought you might find interesting: At the new Mandarin Oriental Hotel in San Francisco, where I was thinking of holding a business meeting, the management is apparently trying to further devalue the dollar by charging $22 per quart of orange juice (more for tomato) *plus* 6.5 percent tax and 15 percent service, *not* including the room, the waiters, etc.

And they talk about "those New York prices!"

—Laura R. Hewins
San Francisco